

Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments



About NACSA

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is a nonprofit membership association of educational agencies that approve and oversee public charter schools. NACSA welcomes and serves the needs of the full range of chartering authorities: local school boards and districts of all sizes, state boards and departments of education, universities and colleges, municipal offices, nonprofit organizations and independent special purpose boards.

NACSA's mission is to achieve the establishment and operation of quality charter schools through responsible oversight in the public interest. We believe that quality authorizing plays a critical role in creating and sustaining quality charter schools. A quality charter school is characterized by high student achievement, financial stewardship, and responsible governance and management. Charter schools can improve public education by creating greater educational opportunities for students and educators and greater educational accountability for public schools.

Board of Directors

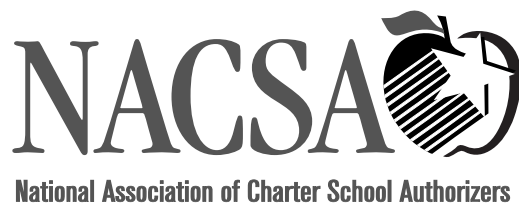
Josephine Baker (<i>Chairperson</i>)	District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
James Merriman (<i>Vice Chairperson</i>)	State University of New York
James Goenner (<i>Treasurer</i>)	Central Michigan University
Jennifer Rippner (<i>Secretary</i>)	Office of the Governor, Georgia
Dennis Doyle	Chula Vista (CA) Elementary School District
Carlo Rodriguez	Miami-Dade County (FL) Public Schools
Justin Testerman	Volunteers of America of Minnesota
Greg Richmond (<i>ex-officio</i>)	National Association of Charter School Authorizers

Staff

Greg Richmond	President
Mark Cannon	Executive Director
Brian Bennett	Project Director
Rebecca Cass	Programs & Services Manager
Amalea Híjar	Operations Manager
Margaret Lin	Senior Associate
William Haft	Senior Associate
Andrea Croom	Office Administrator
Elizabeth Genco	Project Coordinator
Rebecca Davenport	Policy Fellow

Building Excellence in Charter School Authorizing

Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments



Published by
National Association of Charter School Authorizers
www.charterauthorizers.org
© 2005

About the Building Excellence in Charter School Authorizing Project

With the support of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is leading a multi-year project—Building Excellence in Charter School Authorizing—to develop a comprehensive set of tools, guidance, resources and trainings that will support authorizers in conducting their chartering roles and responsibilities effectively.

The primary goal of BECSA is to increase the number of quality charter schools by fostering active, effective authorizing practices from the application process to renewal decisionmaking. This publication is one of the many BECSA tools and resources:

- **Critical Design Issues, Illustrations, and Case Studies:** to identify, through a set of planning questions, a core set of activities and practical choices associated with a comprehensive chartering program.
- **Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing:** to articulate a set of beliefs about quality charter school authorizing and define how authorizers uphold these beliefs in conducting core authorizer responsibilities.
- **Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments:** to encourage self-reflection and analysis on the degree to which current authorizing practices meet the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*.
- **Authorizer Issue Briefs:** to address issues of importance to authorizers and highlight examples of quality authorizing practices.
- **NCLB and Charter School Accountability Integration Guidance:** to establish broadly applicable models for the integration of charter school and NCLB accountability.
- **NCLB Policy Briefs:** to provide guidance and direction for effective implementation of NCLB in the charter school sector.
- **Starting Fresh in Low-Performing Schools:** to facilitate the effective restructuring of chronically low performing schools.
- **Authorizer Online Resource Library:** to provide a comprehensive clearinghouse and directory of documents and resources used by authorizers across the country in all areas and phases of chartering.
- **Authorizer Management Institute and Intensive Seminars:** to provide training in the management skill authorizers need to effectively oversee a portfolio of charter schools.

Building Excellence in Charter School Authorizing Advisors

Jeanne Allen, Center for Education Reform
Checker Finn, Thomas B. Fordham Institute
Jim Griffin, Colorado League of Charter Schools
Lisa Graham Keegan, Education Leadership Council
Robin Lake, University of Washington
Bruno Manno, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Kay Merserth, Harvard University
Anita Nelam, Harte Crossroads Public Schools
Andrew Rotherham, Education Sector
John Rothwell, Ohio Charter School Sponsors Institute
Bob Wedl, Minnesota Sponsors Assistance Network
Caprice Young, California Charter School Association

Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments – Purpose, Structure, and Use

Purpose

NACSA believes that quality charter school authorizing is necessary to have quality charter schools. Of course, that begs the question: What is quality authorizing?

In May 2004, NACSA sought to answer this question and, informed from the lessons learned by experienced authorizers, published its *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. The principles articulate a set of beliefs about quality charter school authorizing while the standards identify core authorizing responsibilities and describe how the principles are upheld within each core responsibility. Together, the *Principles & Standards* create a framework for authorizer practice and highlight the importance of effective authorizing for the overall quality of the charter school initiative.

NACSA has developed a set of **Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments** based on our *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. These Instruments are designed to help authorizers answer the following question:

Do our authorizing practices meet the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*?

Structure

We have designed an instrument for each of the five core authorizer responsibilities—Agency Capacity and Infrastructure, Application Process, Performance Contracting, Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation, and Renewal Decisionmaking—as identified in the *Principles & Standards*.

The Instruments identify benchmarks for the implementation of the standards. The benchmarks are designed to provide additional context of what a particular standard looks like in practice.

For example, the *Principles & Standards* defines a set of standards for the Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation core responsibility. One of these standards states that:

A quality authorizer provides clear, adequate, and evidence-based notice of problems.

The *Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instrument* lists two benchmarks that describe how an authorizer “provides clear, adequate, and evidence-based notice of problems”:

- We provide schools with direct, ongoing feedback on its performance against the goals and terms of their contract.
- We have a written intervention policy that defines the responses and potential consequences for findings of underperformance.

Thus, the benchmarks are intended to provide further definition of the kinds of practices, actions and activities a quality authorizer conducts.

Authorizers can use these benchmarks to assess the extent to which their authorizing practices meet the *Principles & Standards*.

*There is an art of which
every man should master—
the art of reflection.*

—William Hart Coleridge

It is important to note that authorizers across the country operate under various legal, financial and other constraints that may limit how they operate and/or what they do. Therefore, there could be very legitimate reasons for why one or more of these benchmarks are not applicable to your situation. **These instruments simply provide an array of benchmarks for how authorizers fulfill their roles and responsibilities and are intended to help authorizers reflect on their practices by identifying authorizing strengths and areas for ongoing improvement.**

Use

The five instruments can be used together or independently and are generally applicable to the vast universe of charter school authorizers, regardless of type of agency, staff size, office budget, geographic location or years of authorizing experience.

There are many different purposes and uses for these instruments:

- Complete all five instruments and thereby undertake a full self-assessment of your full authorizing program.
- Complete one of the instruments to examine a particular component of your authorizing program (i.e. the application process).
- Have a multi-person staff all complete one or more of the same instruments and then compare results. Is the staff “on the same page” about your current authorizing strengths and weaknesses?
- Some questions in the Self-Evaluation could be answered by schools. Consider asking them to complete those questions.

However you choose to use these instruments, it is important to note that they are just what their name implies, a self-evaluation tool. Therefore, it is up to you to open your mind and critically reflect on your authorizing practices. You must be willing to be frank about what is working well and what might be strengthened, for only then does the self-evaluation hold any value to you.

Think not of yourself as the architect but as the sculptor. Expect to have to do a lot of hard hammering and chiseling and scraping and polishing.

— BC Forbes

Note: The Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments offer guidance that experience indicates will strengthen authorizer practices. This is intended as an educational resource only and is distributed with the understanding that the National Association of Charter school Authorizes is not engaged in providing legal advice nor rendering legal or other professional services by its distribution. Charter school authorizers are encouraged to freely and voluntarily use these instruments to evaluate and strengthen their practices to the extent that they independently determine such guidance to be consistent with the laws and regulations applicable to their jurisdiction.

Instructions for Completing the Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments

The *Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments* are designed to help authorizers answer the following question:

Do our authorizing practices meet the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*?

Materials

When completing a given instrument, you might find it helpful to have available your agency's guiding documents and resources that relate to the topic of the Instrument being completed. For example, in completing the Application Process Instrument, you should have your agency's application materials along with other key information, such as the evaluation rubric, available for reference.

Time to Complete

Plan to dedicate approximately **30 minutes** to completing a single Instrument. Hence, completing the full complement of Instruments will take approximately **2 1/2 hours**.

Step-By-Step Directions

The Self-Evaluation Instruments are designed as a survey. You are to report whether your agency has IMPLEMENTED, PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED or NOT IMPLEMENTED the benchmarks:

1. Confirm the core responsibility (Agency Capacity, Application Process, Performance Contracting, Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation, or Renewal Decisionmaking) for which you are evaluating your practices and review the standards for that core responsibility.

(If you are confused as to what the standards are, refer to the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. You will see that the Self-Evaluation Instruments mirror the standards providing benchmarks for each standard in a given core responsibility.)

2. Rank your performance against the benchmarks noting if the benchmark is "IMPLEMENTED," "PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED" or "NOT IMPLEMENTED."
3. Move onto the next two columns on the table labeled "*Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice*" and "*How do we accomplish this?*"

Here you will record how one would know that you are implementing a given benchmark. If you mark that one of the benchmarks is either "IMPLEMENTED" or "PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED" you should have something to write in one or both of the columns.

For example, one of the benchmarks on *Agency Capacity and Infrastructure Instrument* is: "Our office is guided by a mission statement that all staff know and understand." A guiding document for this benchmark might include the actual written mission statement adopted by your authorizing agency. Actions for how you accomplish this might include staff retreats where the mission statement is reviewed and assessed.

4. Repeat Steps 1-4 until you have finished rating your agency's authorizing practices against all of the benchmarks.
5. Answer the open-ended questions.

Resources Section

At the end of each Instrument is a "Resources" section that provides a sampling of sources you can use to receive additional guidance and support. Many of these resources come from the authorizing sector, however, we have also identified resources from other industries that are applicable to authorizing.

Tell NACSA What You Think

Your interest in these *Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments* tells us that you are like NACSA in that you are constantly seeking ways to improve. We hope these instruments have helped you do that and request your help in understanding how well these instruments, and other services NACSA provides, are supporting your efforts to implement quality authorizing practices. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we ask that you take a few minutes and fill out a very short survey. Results will inform NACSA's self-evaluation of work. The survey can be accessed at:

www.charterauthorizers.org/self-eval.html

For a limited time, NACSA is offering \$25 off our annual conference registration fee for completion of this survey. Thank you!

Now What? Using and Interpreting the Results

The *Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instruments* are just that—your assessment of how well your agency is doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. There is no "score" that you can tally to find out if you passed or failed. Rather, it is up to you to interpret the results and decide what steps to take next. We do have some suggestions for what you might do:

- Write a memo to your supervisor that summarizes how you assessed your agency's authorizing practices. Give particular attention to the areas you identified as the most pressing weaknesses. Explain potential consequences for not strengthening this particular area of your program and resources it will take to make needed improvements.
- Create a work plan for addressing your most pressing weaknesses. Identify the desired outcome, objectives, and actions for achieving the goal. Be sure to identify required resources and targeted completion dates.
- Ask for help if there is an area of your authorizing program that you believe needs improvement, but don't know how. Chances are one of your authorizing colleagues across the country has dealt with a similar issue and may have a solution to offer you. Visit NACSA's Online Resource Library or request that NACSA send a Quick Query on your behalf.
- And lastly, be proud of the areas that you believe are your authorizing strengths. Share with others what is working well for you by posting related resources and documents to NACSA's Online Authorizer Library.

Agency Capacity and Infrastructure Self-Evaluation Instrument

A quality authorizer creates organizational structures, and commits human and financial resources necessary for conducting its authorizing duties effectively and efficiently.

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. mission statement, organizational chart)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. staff meetings, board retreat, staff evaluations)
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES <i>Implements plans, policies and processes that streamline and systematize our work.</i>					
1. Our office is guided by a clear and articulate mission statement that all staff know and understand.					
2. We have an effective working relationship with our board.					
3. There is a clear delineation and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of our board and staff, respectively.					
4. We have articulated annual goals, expected outcomes, and methods for achieving our goals.					
5. We have developed policies and processes that create coherence in implementation and performance from one authorizing function to another.					
6. We dedicate time for reviewing, updating, and improving the implementation of our policies and processes in response to the ongoing evolution of authorizer responsibilities, and charter school issues and needs.					
7. Our office is guided by a strategic plan that we regularly revisit and use as a tool for ongoing self-assessment and long-term planning.					

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. mission statement, organizational chart)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. staff meetings, board retreat, staff evaluations)
Defines external relationships and lines of authority to protect its authorizing functions from conflicts of interest and political influence.					
8. Our authorizing policies and practices are transparent and based on merit, shielding our actions from political influences.					
9. We adhere to a written conflict of interest policy that protects our authorizing practices from real and perceived conflicts of interest.					
HUMAN RESOURCES Enlists competent leadership and required content knowledge through staff, contractual relationships, and/or intra- or inter-agency collaborations.					
10. Staff roles are clearly documented, delineated, implemented and evaluated.					
11. Our staff is sufficient in number, knowledge, and skill to execute our authorizing responsibilities effectively.					
12. Staff performance is reviewed periodically and formally evaluated annually against a set of clear responsibilities and expectations.					
13. Our office is led by a strong manager committed to and capable of achieving our goals.					
14. We seek and make effective use of intra-agency resources, support and assistance.					
15. We seek and make effective use of quality sources of external support, through cross-agency collaboration and contracting.					

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. mission statement, organizational chart)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. staff meetings, board retreat, staff evaluations)
FINANCIAL RESOURCES <i>Determines the financial needs of the office and secures sufficient financial resources to adequately fulfill its authorizing responsibilities.</i>					
16. We have a formal process for preparing and submitting our budget request.					
17. Our budget is clearly aligned with the mission and goals of the office.					
18. We have identified our financial needs in both the short and long term.					
19. We pursue public and private-sector revenue streams to support the quality and efficiency of our authorizing practices.					
Deploys funds effectively and efficiently.					
20. We commit available funds in support of our mission and goals.					
21. We have sound financial accounting and reporting mechanisms in place.					
22. Our financial management system provides on-demand information about revenues and expenditures.					

Questions

1. Based on your self-evaluation, how well is your authorizing agency doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*? How do you rank your performance on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being strongest) in meeting these standards?
2. For the benchmarks that you have identified as “IMPLEMENTED,” what you perceive to be your greatest strength in this core responsibility?
3. For the items identified as “PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED,” create a list of what will it take to fully implement the benchmark.

4. For each of the “NOT IMPLEMENTED” items, create a list of why such items are not implemented and potential consequences, if any, for not implementing the benchmark.
5. Based on the list created above, what have you identified as your agency’s greatest weakness in this core authorizer responsibility?
 - a. How might you work to strengthen this weakness?
 - b. What resources will you need?

Resources: Agency Capacity and Infrastructure

Buckingham, Marcus and Curt Coffman. *First, Break All the Rules: What the World’s Greatest Managers Do Differently*. Simon & Schuster: 1999.

Bryson, John. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement, 3rd Edition*. Jossey-Boss: 2004.

Dropkin, Murray and Bill LaTouche. *The Budget-Building Book for NonProfits: A Step-By-Step Guide for Managers and Boards*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc: 1998

Druker, Peter. *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices*. HarperCollins Publishers; New York, 1990.

Herdman, Paul and Nelson Smith. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 3—Agency Capacity and Infrastructure*. “Built for Quality: The Capacity Needed to Oversee Charter Schools.” June, 2004.

www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo3.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Critical Design Issues for Charter School Authorizers*. “Agency Capacity and Infrastructure.” Pages 13-19. 2003.

www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/criticaldesigns-issues&illustrations.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Online Resource Library*. “Agency Capacity and Infrastructure.” www.charterauthorizers.org/pubnacsa/library/

Smith, Nelson. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 7—Agency Capacity and Infrastructure*. “Square Pegs: Charter Authorizers in Non-Charter Agencies.” Jan., 2005. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo7.pdf

Application Process Self-Evaluation Instrument

A quality authorizer implements a comprehensive application process that follows fair procedures and rigorous criteria and grants charters only to those developers who demonstrate strong capacity for establishing and operating a quality charter school.

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
FAIR PROCEDURES					
<i>Communicates chartering opportunities, processes and decisions openly to the public.</i>					
1. We publicize the application process widely.					
2. We strive to reach out to as many people as possible who might be interested in applying for a charter.					
3. We clearly explain the process for applying for a charter and make our application materials readily available to the public.					
4. We publicly announce our chartering decisions.					
<i>Establishes a submission process with realistic and clear timelines, requirements, and expectations for content and format.</i>					
5. We release application materials in a timely manner in order to provide ample time for developing a strong application.					
6. We provide a clear timeline for the application process and abide by that schedule.					
7. Our application clearly details the required content.					
8. We require applicants to provide only information that is essential for demonstrating the capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
9. We communicate our expectations for the presentation of the application including acceptable length and required format.					
10. If an application deadline exists, we have and apply guidelines for handling late or incomplete applications.					
<i>Explains how each stage of the application process will be evaluated.</i>					
11. We explain the evaluation methods for each stage of the application process.					
12. We define the role of application reviewers.					
13. We articulate how each stage in the application process informs the chartering decision.					
<i>Defines clearly how the requirements of the application are met.</i>					
14. We have staff responsible for fielding and responding to questions from applicants throughout the application process.					
15. We provide citations to applicable statutes and regulations when defining the application content requirements.					
16. We clearly describe the characteristics of a quality response to each requirement of the application.					

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No	Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
RIGOROUS CRITERIA <i>Requires the applicant to provide a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a solid business plan, effective governance and management structures, and evidence of the applicant's capacity to carry out its plan.</i>			
17. We require applicants to provide a clear and compelling mission statement that articulates a purpose for the school.			
18. We require applicants to provide a plan for a quality educational program that can successfully serve all children at the school, and is based on sound educational philosophies and evidence of prior success.			
19. We require applicants to demonstrate a solid business plan that includes realistic enrollment projections, realistic budget assumptions, balanced budgets, positive cash flows, and an adequate and achievable facilities plan.			
20. We require applicants to provide a plan for effective governance including a skilled, experienced board that is void of conflicts of interest and maintains appropriate oversight of the school.			
21. We require applicants to provide a plan for effective management including clear position descriptions, delineation of duties, an organizational chart and administrative policies.			

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
22. We require applicants to demonstrate the capacity needed to effectively carry out their plan by examining the applicants' prior achievements, employment histories, and ties to the community the school will serve.					
23. We require applicants to present a sound plan to start the school within the time and with the resources available from approval of the charter to the first day of school.					
<i>Is open to considering innovative educational philosophies and approaches.</i>					
24. Our evaluation criteria permit a variety of educational models and philosophies to meet the standards of rigor.					
25. We do not allow personal biases toward certain educational philosophies and/or approaches to influence our chartering decisions.					
CHARTER DECISIONS <i>Conducts a thorough evaluation of the applicants using reviewers with educational, organizational, legal, and financial expertise.</i>					
26. We enlist review teams, including external reviewers if necessary, with expertise in the content areas of the application and knowledge of new schools.					
27. We have clear internal policies on what review materials constitute public record and can be shared with applicant groups and the public.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
28. We ensure that the factors that inform chartering decisions are clearly documented.					
Grants charters only to applicants that have met the established criteria.					
29. Our decisions are based on the totality of information gathered through each stage of the application process.					
30. We grant charters only to applicants that have met the criteria.					
31. Our chartering decisions are free of political influence.					
Provides prompt notification of decisions, and informs applicants of their rights and responsibilities.					
32. We inform applicants of chartering decisions on published announcement dates.					
33. We explain the process for negotiating the terms of the contract.					
34. We explain to denied applicants their rights to appeal in accordance with state charter law.					
35. We provide denied applicants with our reasons for denial.					
Makes a separate decision, after granting a charter, about a school's readiness to open.					
36. Our chartering decisions are made in a timely manner so that approved schools have adequate time to prepare for operation.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. application packet, evaluation rubrics)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. informational sessions, external review panels, applicant interviews, public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
37. We clearly define the conditions a school must satisfy in order to be considered ready to open.					
38. We make decisions on a school's readiness to open on a clear and consistent basis.					

Questions

1. Based on your self-evaluation, how well is your authorizing agency doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*? How do you rank your performance on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being strongest) in meeting these standards?
2. For the benchmarks that you have identified as “IMPLEMENTED,” what you perceive to be your greatest strength in this core responsibility?
3. For the items identified as “PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED,” create a list of what will it take to fully implement the benchmark.
4. For each of the “NOT IMPLEMENTED” items, create a list of why such items are not implemented and potential consequences, if any, for not implementing the benchmark.
5. Based on the list created above, what have you identified as your agency’s greatest weakness in this core authorizer responsibility?
 - a. How might you work to strengthen this weakness?
 - b. What resources will you need?

Resources: Application Process

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Critical Design Issues for Charter School Authorizers*. “Application Process.” Pages 19-29. 2003.

www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/criticaldesigns-issues&illustrations.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Online Resource Library*. “Application Process.” www.charterauthorizers.org/pubnacsa/library/

Performance Contracting Self-Evaluation Instrument

A quality authorizer negotiates contracts with charter schools that clearly articulate the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, expected outcomes, measures for evaluating success or failure, performance consequences and other material terms.

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. contract template, accountability plan guidance)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. meeting with governing board, trainings on goal setting)
NEGOTIATION <i>Utilizes a collaborative process to ensure mutual agreement over the terms of the contract.</i>					
1. We have established a contract template that defines and addresses the material terms of the charter.					
2. We discuss the terms of the contract with each school and consider possible modifications or improvements to the template.					
3. We provide ample guidance about and a detailed explanation of the parameters of the authorizer/school relationship.					
4. We follow a process for amending the terms of the contract that are mutually agreed upon.					
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES <i>Executes contracts that:</i> <u>Autonomy</u> — Define the school's rights, including those related to the educational program, control of funds, school management decisions, and waivers from traditional public school laws and regulations.					
5. Our contracts comply with state law regarding the school's autonomy and authority in relation to its educational program, governance and management, budget, personnel and operations.					
6. Our contracts are written broadly enough to afford school leadership the flexibility to make strategic changes to their plans and programs as needed while remaining faithful to the contract terms.					

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. contract template, accountability plan guidance)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. meeting with governing board, trainings on goal setting)
7. We incorporate waivers from state law into the contract as needed.					
Expected Outcomes: Define clear, measurable, attainable student achievement and organizational performance goals against which the authorizer will evaluate the school on an ongoing basis and for renewal.					
8. Our contracts clearly delineate the student achievement and organizational performance goals for which we hold the school accountable.					
9. We ensure that the goals for which we hold schools accountable are measurable and can be objectively determined.					
Articulate rigorous performance indicators and standards relative to each of the stated goals.					
10. Our contracts identify the level of performance that the school commits to attain to achieve its goals.					
Evaluation Process: Stipulate the process for evaluation, including but not limited to: the types of academic, organizational, financial, and compliance data that will be reviewed, and the process and frequency for gathering and reporting such data.					
11. Our contracts describe the accountability system's method for collecting data.					
12. Our contracts affirm our authority to require data that are needed from the school for accountability purposes.					
13. Our contracts include specific descriptions of the type and frequency of the school's reporting.					
Performance Consequences: Explain the conditions under which the authorizer may intervene in the school's operation or revoke the contract as well as procedures/protocols by which such interventions may occur; and define the criteria for renewal.					
14. We provide written descriptions of our expected responses to and the possible consequences for a school's failure to meet agreed upon requirements and outcomes.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. contract template, accountability plan guidance)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. meeting with governing board, trainings on goal setting)
	Yes	Partial	No		
Other Material Terms: Include the statutory, regulatory, and procedural terms and conditions of operation.					
16. Our contracts identify the statutory, regulatory, and procedural requirements of operation that the school must meet.					

Questions

1. Based on your self-evaluation, how well is your authorizing agency doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*? How do you rank your performance on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being strongest) in meeting these standards?
2. For the benchmarks that you have identified as “IMPLEMENTED,” what you perceive to be your greatest strength in this core responsibility?
3. For the items identified as “PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED,” create a list of what will it take to fully implement the benchmark.
4. For each of the “NOT IMPLEMENTED” items, create a list of why such items are not implemented and potential consequences, if any, for not implementing the benchmark.
5. Based on the list created above, what have you identified as your agency’s greatest weakness in this core authorizer responsibility?
 - a. How might you work to strengthen this weakness?
 - b. What resources will you need?

Resources: Performance Contracting

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Critical Design Issues for Charter School Authorizers*. “Charter Contract or Performance Agreement.” Pages 29-37. 2003.
www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/criticaldesigns-issues&illustrations.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Online Resource Library*.
 “Performance Contracting.” www.charterauthorizers.org/pubnacsa/library/

Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation Self-Evaluation Instrument

A quality authorizer conducts contract oversight that evaluates performance, monitors compliance, informs intervention and renewal decisions, and ensures autonomy provided under applicable law.

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. intervention protocol, accountability handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting on-site reviews, collaborating with intra-agency units)
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION <i>Implements an accountability system that generates all the information needed to determine whether a school is meeting the goals and standards articulated in its contract.</i>					
1. We have established a comprehensive, transparent accountability system for gathering specific data to assess a school's performance against its student achievement and organizational performance goals.					
2. We document and disseminate the evaluation criteria we apply to data collected through our accountability system.					
3. We evaluate academic performance data, including absolute, value-added and comparative measures, from multiple sources.					
4. We evaluate organizational performance data from multiple sources.					
5. We evaluate financial performance data from multiple sources.					
6. We competently and comprehensively review and analyze required state assessment results for each school.					
7. Our analysis of required state assessment results is an integral source of evidence on the effectiveness of the school's academic program.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. intervention protocol, accountability handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting on-site reviews, collaborating with intra-agency units)
	Yes	Partial	No		
8. We gather qualitative data that corroborate and augment quantitative data on a school's performance.					
9. We report findings on school performance to schools and the public in a clear and timely manner.					
MONITORS COMPLIANCE <i>Monitors compliance requirements, including those legally mandated and those that are essential to fulfill the authorizer's public oversight responsibility</i>					
10. Our office has a firm understanding of the compliance requirements of charter schools.					
11. We have staff assigned to oversee each school's adherence to compliance requirements.					
12. We have protocols for monitoring compliance requirements and reporting findings to the schools and the public.					
13. We understand and have clearly delineated our roles and responsibilities for monitoring special education program compliance.					
14. We understand and have clearly delineated our roles and responsibilities for monitoring health, safety and facilities compliance.					
15. We understand and have clearly delineated our roles and responsibilities for monitoring civil rights compliance.					
16. We understand and have clearly delineated our roles and responsibilities for monitoring student discipline compliance.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. intervention protocol, accountability handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting on-site reviews, collaborating with intra-agency units)
	Yes	Partial	No		
Articulates the consequences for failing to meet compliance requirements.					
17. Our non-compliance policies are clearly defined and identify the range of actions to be taken if we find issues of noncompliance.					
18. We disseminate our non-compliance policies to all schools, and staff members are available to provide further explanation.					
Ensures schools fulfill its legal obligations to students and parents.					
19. We follow a process for handling complaints from parents and students.					
Provides clear, adequate and evidence-based notice of problems.					
20. We provide schools with direct, ongoing feedback on its performance against the goals and terms of their contract.					
21. We have a written intervention policy that defines responses and potential consequences for findings of underperformance.					
Allows reasonable time for remediation.					
22. We give schools adequate time to address and correct performance deficiencies.					
Makes decisions about whether and how to intervene on a clear and consistent basis.					
23. Our intervention policy clearly defines our role in providing intervention support and/or technical assistance.					
AUTONOMY					
Respects the school's authority over its day-to-day operations.					
24. Our oversight policies and practices are consistent with, and do not exceed, the authority granted to us by statute, regulations and our contract with each school.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. intervention protocol, accountability handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting on-site reviews, collaborating with intra-agency units)
	Yes	Partial	No		
25. We collect information only as often as necessary to fulfill our oversight responsibilities.					
26. We have determined which information is necessary to collect on an annual, quarterly or more frequent basis.					
27. We provide schools with adequate notice of our reporting requirements.					
28. We ensure that our reporting requirements do not make unnecessary requests for duplicative information.					
29. We work to shield schools from requests for nonessential paperwork.					

Questions

1. Based on your self-evaluation, how well is your authorizing agency doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*? How do you rank your performance on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being strongest) in meeting these standards?
2. For the benchmarks that you have identified as “IMPLEMENTED,” what you perceive to be your greatest strength in this core responsibility?
3. For the items identified as “PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED,” create a list of what will it take to fully implement the benchmark.
4. For each of the “NOT IMPLEMENTED” items, create a list of why such items are not implemented and potential consequences, if any, for not implementing the benchmark.
5. Based on the list created above, what have you identified as your agency’s greatest weakness in this core authorizer responsibility?
 - a. How might you work to strengthen this weakness?
 - b. What resources will you need?

Resources: Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation

DiBiase, Rebecca Wolf. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 4—Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation*. “The Value of Quality On-Site School Reviews: Seeing is Believing.” July, 2004. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo4.pdf

Hassel, Bryan and Paul Herdman. *Charter School Accountability: A Guide to Issues and Options for Charter Authorizers*. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000.

Landau, Richard. Dykema Gossett PLLC & National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Reference Guide to Special Education Law for Charter School Authorizers*. Dec., 2003. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/specialedlaw-referenceguide.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Critical Design Issues for Charter School Authorizers*. “Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation.” Pages 37-43. 2003. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/criticaldesigns-issues&illustrations.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 5—Agency Capacity and Infrastructure*. “Charter School Authorizers and Oversight: Where is the Line Between Effectively Holding Schools Accountable and Overregulation?” Oct., 2005. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo5.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Online Resource Library*. “Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation.” www.charterauthorizers.org/pubnacsa/library/

Renewal Decisionmaking Self-Evaluation Instrument

A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive data to make merit-based renewal decisions.

Benchmark	Implemented? Yes Partial No			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. renewal criteria, renewal handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting renewal visit,holding public hearings)
TRANSPARENT PROCESS <i>Articulates the criteria for renewal.</i>					
1. Our renewal criteria are clearly communicated to schools at the outset and throughout the term of their contract.					
<i>Publishes a timetable and process for renewal decisionmaking.</i>					
2. We thoroughly describe the process by which renewal decisions are made.					
3. We provide guidelines and a timetable that details each stage in the renewal decisionmaking process.					
<i>Clearly communicates the options and consequences available under state law including revocation, non-renewal, renewal with conditions, and renewal.</i>					
4. We are able to clearly articulate how the renewal decisionmaking options allowed under state law are considered.					
<i>Explains any available rights of appeal, whether to administrative or legal bodies, through which the decision of the authorizer can be challenged.</i>					
5. We provide an explanation of the process by which our renewal decisions can be appealed.					
<i>Analyzes and weighs data regarding a school's performance over time in relation to the goals and terms of its contract.</i>					
6. Our renewal decisions are supported by a body of evidence accumulated over the term of a school's charter.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. renewal criteria, renewal handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting renewal visit, holding public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
Considers multiple sources of data, including state-mandated, standardized and internal test data, student academic growth over time, evidence of mission-related outcomes and qualitative reviews, to judge school quality.					
7. Our renewal decisions are informed by a comprehensive set of data gathered through multiple methods.					
8. We consider Adequate Yearly Progress determinations under NCLB when making renewal decisions.					
Solicits parent and public input into the charter renewal process and articulates how community input will affect the decision.					
9. We provide opportunities for parents and the public to give input into the renewal process.					
10. We articulate how parent and public input impacts a renewal decision.					
MERIT-BASED DECISIONS Grants renewal only to a school with a quality educational program that has achieved the goals and standards identified in its contract, is organizationally and financially viable, and has been faithful to the terms of its contract and applicable law.					
11. We hold schools accountable for increased student achievement.					
12. We hold schools accountable for strong financial and organizational strong financial and organizational performance.					
13. We hold schools accountable for compliance with its contract terms.					
14. We are confident that our renewal decisions reflect sound and defensible judgments about a school's performance.					
15. Our renewal decisions are not compromised by political influence.					

Benchmark	Implemented?			Guiding documents that serve as a tool and archive for ongoing practice (e.g. renewal criteria, renewal handbook)	How do we accomplish this? (e.g. reviewing financial audits, conducting renewal visit,holding public hearings)
	Yes	Partial	No		
Outlines a protocol for the orderly closure of a school.					
16. We have clear, written procedures for closing schools, which outline our shared responsibilities with the school's officials for the reallocation of students, dissolution of assets and general implementation of the closure plan.					

Questions

1. Based on your self-evaluation, how well is your authorizing agency doing in meeting the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*? How do you rank your performance on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being strongest) in meeting these standards?
2. For the benchmarks that you have identified as “IMPLEMENTED,” what you perceive to be your greatest strength in this core responsibility?
3. For the items identified as “PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED,” create a list of what will it take to fully implement the benchmark.
4. For each of the “NOT IMPLEMENTED” items, create a list of why such items are not implemented and potential consequences, if any, for not implementing the benchmark.
5. Based on the list created above, what have you identified as your agency’s greatest weakness in this core authorizer responsibility?
 - a. How might you work to strengthen this weakness?
 - b. What resources will you need?

Resources: Renewal Decisionmaking

Geyer, Veronica. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 8—Renewal Decision Making*. “The Authorizer and Charter School Closures: Exercising Adaptive Leadership to Protect the Public Interest.” Mar., 2005.

www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo8.pdf

Haft, William. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Issue Brief No. 1—University of New York*. Feb., 2004. www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/IssueBriefNo1.pdf

Hassel, Bryan and Meagan Batdorff. *High Stakes: Findings from a National Study on Life-and-Death Decisions By Charter School Authorizers*. Smith Richardson Foundation: February 2004.

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Critical Design Issues for Charter School Authorizers*. "Renewal Decisionmaking." Pages 43-49. 2003.

www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/criticaldesigns-issues&illustrations.pdf

National Association of Charter School Authorizers. *Online Resource Library*. "Renewal Decisionmaking." www.charterauthorizers.org/pubnacsa/library/



National Association of Charter School Authorizers

www.charterauthorizers.org